Verifying Word Meaning

Name: _____ Date: _____ Score: _____ / 10

Quick Review

Context clues and root analysis give you a **preliminary guess** about a word's meaning. Smart readers VERIFY that guess before they rely on it. Four good verification moves: (1) **Substitute** your guess back into the sentence — does the sentence still make sense? (2) **Look it up** in a dictionary to confirm the definition AND the part of speech. (3) **Read on** — the next sentence often confirms or corrects your guess. (4) **Check another use** of the same word in a different sentence — does your meaning hold? If any check fails, revise your guess.

PRACTICE

Choose the BEST way to verify or revise the word-meaning guess in each item.

1. Read the sentence: *The athlete's **stamina** impressed everyone in the gym.* Jamal guesses that *stamina* means *strength*. Which step would BEST help Jamal verify his guess?

A. Count how many syllables *stamina* has.

B. Check if *stamina* looks like a Spanish word.

C. Read the next sentence to see whether *strength* still fits.

D. Ask a friend to guess what the word means.

2. Mei reads: *The classroom was **chaotic**: papers flew, students shouted, and the gerbil ran loose.* She guesses *chaotic* means *completely disorderly*. The BEST way to verify her guess is to —

A. substitute *completely disorderly* back into the sentence and check if it still makes sense.

B. look for the word *chaotic* in the index of the textbook.

C. underline every adjective in the paragraph.

D. ask whether the word came from Greek or Latin.

3. Tomas reads sentence 1: *The hikers reached the **summit** and gazed at the valley below.* He guesses *summit* means *the top of the mountain*. Then he reads sentence 2 from a news article: *World leaders gathered for a climate **summit** in Geneva.* What should Tomas conclude?

A. His guess is wrong; *summit* means *news article*.

B. Sentence 2 has no useful information about the word.

C. Both sentences use the word the same way.

D. *Summit* has at least two related meanings; his first guess fits sentence 1 but a related meaning — a top-level meeting — fits sentence 2.

4. Read the sentence: *The teacher's gentle voice was a **balm** after a stressful test.* Olivia guesses that *balm* means *warning*. Which check would BEST help her see her guess is WRONG?

A. Counting how often the word appears in the chapter.

B. Substituting *warning* back into the sentence and asking whether it makes sense.

C. Asking what part of speech *balm* is.

D. Looking at the cover of the book for clues.

5. Mara reads: *The new policy was hailed as a **panacea** for the city's traffic.* She has no idea what **panacea** means. She looks it up in a dictionary and finds: *panacea, noun, a solution that is believed to fix every problem.* Which step should she do NEXT to confirm she understands the word IN THIS SENTENCE?

A. Memorize the dictionary entry word-for-word.

B. Look up a different word from the sentence.

C. Substitute the dictionary's definition back into the sentence and check that the sentence still makes sense.

D. Stop reading the article.

6. Read this passage:
*Diego thought **fastidious** meant 'fast.' Then he read the next line: 'Mrs. Pereira was so fastidious that she lined up her pencils by size before every class.'*
What should Diego do?

A. Revise his guess; *fastidious* likely means *extremely careful about details*, not *fast*.

B. Keep his original guess because *fast* sounds like *fastidious*.

C. Skip the word and stop reading.

D. Decide the author used the word incorrectly.

7. Read the sentence: *The judge's **impartial** ruling satisfied both teams.* Lucas guesses *impartial* means *fair to both sides*. Which check would give him the STRONGEST confirmation?

A. Counting the letters in *impartial*.

B. Checking a dictionary, which defines *impartial* as *not favoring one side over another*.

C. Asking if anyone has heard the word before.

D. Comparing *impartial* with *important*.

8. Read these two sentences with the same word:
*1) The carpenter used a fine **plane** to smooth the wood.*
*2) The pilot flew the small **plane** through the clouds.*
Mia first thinks **plane** means *a flying machine*. What should she conclude?

A. Sentence 1 has a typo and should say *plate*.

B. Both sentences use the word the same way.

C. Her guess is wrong everywhere and the word means something else entirely.

D. Her guess fits sentence 2, but in sentence 1 **plane** is a different word — a woodworking tool that smooths surfaces.

9. Read the sentence: *The musician's **melancholy** tune left the audience in tears.*
(a) Make a preliminary guess about what **melancholy** means. (b) Describe ONE specific verification step you could take and what result would CONFIRM your guess. (c) Describe ONE result that would make you REVISE your guess.

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10. Read these two sentences:
*1) The orchestra played a single, sustained **note** for three full seconds.*
*2) Please leave a **note** on the door for the next visitor.*
Eli thinks **note** means *a sound played by an instrument*. Test his guess against BOTH sentences. Where does it hold? Where does it fail? What should he conclude in 1–2 sentences?

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Answer Keys

1	A	B	**C**	D	6	**A**	B	C	D
2	**A**	B	C	D	7	A	**B**	C	D
3	A	B	C	**D**	8	A	B	C	**D**
4	A	**B**	C	D	9	See below			
5	A	B	**C**	D	10	See below			

Explanations

1. C	Reading on is a powerful verification step: the next sentence often confirms or refines the meaning. A counts syllables, which has nothing to do with meaning. B confuses spelling with definition. D outsources verification rather than using the text.
2. A	**Substitution** is one of the quickest verification moves: *The classroom was completely disorderly: papers flew, students shouted...* reads naturally, so the guess holds. B confuses an index (which finds page numbers) with a glossary or dictionary. C is a grammar task, not a meaning check. D is interesting trivia but does not test her current guess.
3. D	Verifying across multiple uses shows when a word has more than one meaning. **Summit** literally means the highest point of a mountain (sentence 1) and figuratively means a top-level meeting of leaders (sentence 2). A throws out a correct guess. B ignores useful evidence. C misses the shift from literal to figurative.
4. B	Substitution would give *The teacher's gentle voice was a warning after a stressful test* — which doesn't fit *gentle* or *after a stressful test*. The substitution failure shows the guess is wrong. A is a frequency check, not a meaning check. C narrows the part of speech but doesn't catch the meaning error. D is unrelated to the word.
5. C	A dictionary check is a strong start, but the final verification step is **substitution back into the original sentence**: *The new policy was hailed as a solution that fixes every problem for the city's traffic.* The sentence still makes sense, so the meaning holds. A memorizes without checking. B detours from the word in question. D abandons the task instead of finishing it.
6. A	The new sentence shows behavior that has nothing to do with speed and everything to do with careful attention to detail. Diego should **revise his guess**. B falls into the sound-alike trap (*fastidious* just begins with *fast*). C abandons the work of verification. D blames the writer for the reader's mistake.
7. B	A dictionary check confirms both Lucas's meaning and that no key nuance is missing. A counts letters — unrelated to meaning. C is a popularity poll, not a definition check. D is the classic sound-alike trap (*impartial* shares only the first three letters with *important* and they share no meaning).
8. D	Verifying across two contexts can REVEAL that a word has more than one meaning. Mia's guess fits sentence 2 (a flying machine), but sentence 1 must use a different meaning — *plane* as a carpenter's smoothing tool. A invents a typo to protect a wrong guess. B ignores the clear difference in context. C overcorrects and discards a correct meaning.

9.	**Answer:** (a) Preliminary guess: melancholy probably means deeply sad — the tune left the audience in tears. (b) Verification step: substitute deeply sad into the sentence — The musician's deeply sad tune left the audience in tears — or look it up in a dictionary. A confirming result is a dictionary entry such as melancholy: a feeling of pensive sadness. (c) A revising result would be discovering that melancholy actually meant cheerful or loud — either would make my guess fail when I read on or check a dictionary.
10.	**Answer:** Eli's guess holds in sentence 1: an orchestra plays musical notes. His guess fails in sentence 2: a note on the door is not a sound — it is a short written message. Eli should conclude that note has at least two distinct meanings, and he must use context in each new sentence to pick the right one.

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